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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to discuss the implications for Arizona's community colleges of the State Board's attempt to play a stronger statewide leadership role, as recommended by the 1997 performance audit of the board. This report is based on 62 relevant papers, and the findings from a three-day retreat that focused on this issue. An introductory section addresses: (1) What does "stronger statewide leadership" mean? and (2) How would this enhance state board operations? The remainder of the report presents emerging themes and recommendations that came from the three-day meeting. The primary themes identified include: (1) community colleges are the learning providers of first choice for individuals, businesses, governmental agencies, and any others concerned with training or educating adults; (2) community colleges should remain under local control; (3) collaborations must be built with business and industry groups and with other schools; (4) faculty and staff development is an essential strategy for bringing about education reform; and (5) community colleges must be prepared to provide services for diverse learners. Specific recommendations were made for the state board to follow in the areas of measuring systemwide effectiveness and monitoring and assessing academic programs. (TGO)

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Stronger Statewide Leadership

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Executive Director's Concept Paper
November 1997

JC 990 399

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State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona

Stronger Statewide Leadership

In the 1997 Performance Audit of the State Board, the Auditor General called for it to "take a stronger statewide leadership role." The purpose of this paper is to discuss the implication of this finding in the context of the report of the Committee on the Future of Arizona Community Colleges.

On September 4-6, 1996, after months of preparation during which 62 papers were prepared and shared with the participants, 79 individuals assembled in a retreat setting for a 3-day structured discussion (Charrette) on the future of Arizona community colleges. A report on the Charrette was prepared that has served as the basis for ongoing planning for the system.

These two reports and the State Board Mission and Vision statements provide the basis for this paper.

Don Puyear, November 1997

What Does "Stronger Statewide Leadership" Mean?

Both the Charrette report and the report of the Auditor General lead to similar conclusions regarding statewide leadership on the part of the State Board within the context of continued local control of community colleges with statewide coordination.

One pattern emerges with respect to institutional effectiveness:

- The State Board, in conjunction with the colleges and other stakeholders, would identify outcomes and performance measures which would be used to improve the effectiveness of community colleges in meeting the needs of students, communities, and the state.
- The State Board would act with urgency to improve data collection and analysis and gather information from college and district reports and from original research regarding these outcomes.
- The State Board would interpret the successes and challenges of Arizona community colleges and disseminate the information to all stakeholders.

A similar pattern emerges with respect to statewide issues affecting community colleges:

- The State Board, in conjunction with the colleges and other stakeholders, would identify issues of statewide importance to community colleges. The Charrette report is an example of this type of activity.
- The State Board would establish study groups or task forces to develop background information and prepare alternatives. These study groups and task forces may include State Board members, and will usually include stakeholders such as college administrators, faculty, governing board members, and representatives of other affected groups. The 1994 Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness Measures and the Committee on the Future of Community Colleges are examples of this type of activity.
- The State Board would then determine its role in regards to coordination, advocacy, and strategic direction and initiate action to bring about the desired outcome.

How Would This Enhance State Board Operations?

In exercising this leadership function, the State Board would keep its focus on statewide issues and outcomes, as opposed to process. While the State Board would still have to approve certain matters as prescribed by statute or rule, this would not be its primary focus. Stronger statewide leadership would entail a shift of emphasis from an "approval mode" to a more proactive identification of issues and advocacy. This is consistent with established mission and vision statements.

ATTACHMENT ONE

State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona

Mission

The mission of the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona is to provide for the governance, oversight, planning, and coordination of Arizona's community college system, in order to provide an integrated statewide system of community colleges that satisfies the differing educational needs of all the peoples of Arizona.

Adopted November 21, 1992

Vision

We, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges of Arizona, are dedicated to the principle that the citizens of this state must have access to a broad array of educational services through community colleges. We are guided by high ethical standards, a vision for the future of the future of the state, and an appreciation of the broad cultural diversity of the citizenry. We are committed to the principles of responsible management of state resources and are innovators in planning for the future development of the state community college system.

We systematically assess the dynamic changes in higher education to foster modifications in policies and practices required for Arizona's community colleges to remain at the forefront of educational effectiveness. We focus on the current and future needs of individual students and the educational needs of the entire state. We are an effective force for unity within the system of community colleges as it prepares for the global and interdependent society of the twenty-first century.

In fulfilling our trust, we balance the responsibility to provide statewide governance and oversight with sensitivity to the responsibility of the District Governing Boards as stewards of the respective community college districts. We are the leading advocate for the community college system with the Legislature, the Executive Branch of Government, other state agencies, and with the public. We accept responsibility for the resources and mission entrusted to us by the citizens of Arizona.

Adopted June 18, 1994

ATTACHMENT TWO

Report on the Charrette Conducted on September 4-6, 1996 Emerging Themes

The following is an abstract of the Report on the Charrette conducted on September 4-6, 1996 regarding how the mission, organization, practices and instruction of Arizona Community Colleges should be modified to best meet the needs of the citizens of the state during the first decades of the twenty-first century.

Community Colleges as Learning Providers of First Choice

The first and most pervasive theme that emerged from the Charrette was that community colleges should position themselves to be the learning providers of first choice for individuals, businesses, governmental agencies, and any others concerned with the training or education of adults. This goal has many implications, including the following:

- Learning experiences at community colleges must be competency-based.
- Community colleges must become brokers of learning experiences based on learner needs
- Community colleges must become assessment centers for the evaluation and certification of prior knowledge
- Community colleges should provide affordable, flexible learning opportunities.
- Arizona community colleges and universities must continue to refine and simplify the transfer process.
- Community colleges will use technology to reach learners who could not previously be served.
- Community colleges should expand their offerings to include the Bachelor of Applied Science degree.

Local Control with Statewide Coordination

Perhaps no theme was more consistently stated than that Arizona community colleges must remain under local control. Yet there was also a clear understanding that certain functions require state-level coordination and consistency. The group identified some matters that would be coordinated most effectively at the state level

- Strategic leadership
- Data collection and analysis
- Accountability reporting
- Transfer articulation
- Legislative relations
- Marketing/image

Changing Paradigms

The "picture in our mind" about how community colleges operate must change if community colleges are to reach their potential in the coming decades. Funding and enrollment reporting models are based on a combination of old public school and university reporting standards that do not reflect the present reality and are inhibitors to needed reform in community college operations.

- The semester as the primary period of instruction.
- Full Time Student Equivalent (FTSE) as the basis of funding.
- The distinction between credit and credit-free instruction.

Collaboration

The word "collaboration" appears more often than any other word in the notes on the Charrette, reflecting the growing realization that community colleges must work with others if they are to accomplish their mission. This collaboration must serve to break down barriers of "turf" and protectionism, and it demands mutual respect among those involved. Community colleges must collaborate with, among others:

- Business and industry groups in order to provide facilities for occupational programs.
- Secondary and middle schools to enhance secondary school retention and to reduce the need for remediation at the community college level.
- Universities and private postsecondary institutions to provide effective transfer opportunities for community college students.
- One another to avoid duplication and to provide mutual support.

Faculty and Staff Development

Faculty and staff development is no longer merely desirable; it is an essential strategy to bring about the educational reforms necessary to meet the challenges noted in earlier themes.

Two areas of concentration may dominate the faculty and staff development for the foreseeable future:

- Learning to deal with technology and new learning strategies.
- Developing a sense of "community" within the faculty and staff.

Finances and Resource Development

Charrette participants expressed uncertainty about the financing of Arizona's community colleges in the coming years.

The group recommended that Arizona community colleges take the following actions:

- Learn from the experiences of other states
- Prepare a model to explore the effects of various changes on the different districts.
- Explore ways to diversify the tax base for community colleges.

Services for Diverse Learners

Arizona's community colleges will continue to serve students from a kaleidoscope of backgrounds and experiences. As the communities served become even more diverse, it is essential that the community college be prepared to provide new as well as continuing services to meet the changing needs of the broad array of learners who choose to enroll. Two significant services are:

- Student services for distance learners.
- Availability of support services at extended hours and remote locations.

Building On Strengths; Celebrating Successes

Arizona's community colleges have a nationwide reputation for excellence and innovation. As the system approaches its fifth decade of service to Arizona and Arizonans, it is appropriate that Arizona

community colleges acknowledge and celebrate their inspiring successes, and build on them to meet the crucial challenges of the 21st Century. As cooperating and collaborating partners, Arizona community colleges can develop a new synergy in education that will carry them beyond the sum total of the capacity of individual institutions, elevating them to new heights of services.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Finding I
Board Needs to Take Stronger Statewide Leadership Role

The State Board could strengthen its leadership role in Arizona's community college system by focusing more of its efforts on its most important responsibilities. The community college system receives substantial state funding and affects not only thousands of students but also the State's business community, which relies on the system to provide employees who are sufficiently educated for the job market. The Board, charged by statute with overseeing the system, has taken steps toward a stronger role, but has not sufficiently addressed two fundamental areas. First, the Board does not adequately measure community college system effectiveness, both at the statewide level and the college level. Second, it does not conduct ongoing assessment of academic program quality. The Board could increase its ability to provide meaningful leadership by following other states' examples in measuring institutional effectiveness and periodically evaluating existing academic programs.

Community College System Important to State

The State has a significant interest in the quality and effectiveness of the community colleges because they are an important part of Arizona's education system. In the fall 1996 semester, the system served 155,385 students, including 34,518 who attended full-time and 120,867 who attended part-time. By contrast, the state universities served 101,228 students, over two-thirds of whom were full-time, in fall 1996. State appropriations to the system are significant, providing approximately $103 million in fiscal year 1995-96. Further, the State's business community relies on the colleges to provide training to employees, as well as to supply a pool of job applicants who are prepared to meet employers' needs. For example, in 1995-96, the community colleges awarded certificates to 4,501 students in occupational programs such as health professions, business management, and building trades.

State Board plays important part -- The State Board has an important role to play. A.R.S. defines the State Board's purpose as to provide for the "oversight, planning, and coordination of the community college system in areas of statewide concern." Specifically, the Board is directed to set operating standards for colleges, prescribe guidelines for course transfer, and establish curricula and courses that serve the interests of the State, among other responsibilities. Recently, the Board and its staff have begun to study how the Board can best serve the community college system. In 1996, the Board drew together a "Committee on the Future" to discuss the future of Arizona's community colleges and to consider how the system can best meet the State's changing needs. Committee members surveyed a large group of stakeholders about their satisfaction with the system and how it could be improved. This effort, which drew upon the knowledge and views of district and State Board members, students, college administrators, taxpayers, and others, yielded a number of specific recommendations, including distance learning, teacher certification, and transfer of community college credits to universities. (See Finding II, pages 13 through 17, for information about the transfer articulation project, and Finding IV, pages 23 through 24, for more information about teacher certification. Pages 25 through 27 provide other pertinent information about distance learning.)

Board Should Focus on Effectiveness in Two Areas

While the recent studies and task forces represent important progress toward effective statewide leadership, the Board should focus on two crucial areas to ensure the system is effectively serving the State's needs. First, the Board should measure system effectiveness, both at the statewide level and the

college level. Second, it should initiate ongoing assessment of academic program quality.

Board should measure system effectiveness -- To meet its statutory oversight role, the Board should assess and monitor statewide system performance. A Board-sponsored Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness has identified five key elements of system performance: access to education, transfer effectiveness, economic impact and workforce development, community development, and return on investment. Information about these elements would answer questions about whether the system meets the needs of its various constituent groups, such as students, employers, universities, the community, and the State, and would permit objective assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the system and each college.

However, while the need for statewide collection of information related to institutional effectiveness has been recognized for at least 10 years, little progress has been made. For example, the 1987 Sunset review (Auditor General Report 87-4) of the State Board found that because the Board did not require districts to report on student success, several districts did not monitor the success of their students. The report stated that such monitoring could enable colleges and the Board to make comparisons, identify potential problems, and revise or even terminate ineffective programs. Nearly ten years later, in April 1996, a stakeholder group convened by the Board found that "there is no statewide tracking system" of institutional assessment efforts, although "it is desperately needed." The Committee on the Future confirmed, in September 1996, that the lack of consistent information on programs and students continued to be a major weakness in the current system. Nearly all of the stakeholders surveyed for this audit, including all State Board members who responded to the survey, reported that tracking students and measuring effectiveness were valuable, but many respondents said the Board does not perform these functions.

In response to the Task Force's recommendations, the Board has taken some steps, but it has not gone far enough. For example, as a first step toward measuring transfer effectiveness, the Board now receives reports from the university system showing numbers of university students and university graduates who earned community college credit. However, neither the Board nor the community colleges have requested report cards from the universities like those provided to high schools, which show the number of the school's students who applied to the university, the number admitted, and their success measured by grade point average. The Board has made less progress in other elements of system performance, relying on the districts to evaluate themselves. For example, the Board has indicated that cost-effectiveness monitoring is not an appropriate function for the Board, in part because the majority of college funding dies not come from the State. However, the State does provide over $100 million annually to support the community college system, and has a legitimate interest in ensuring that its money is used in the most cost-effective way.

Other states do more to measure institutional effectiveness. Twenty-seven of the 40 states contacted said they directly measure the effectiveness of their community college systems. In addition to academic program evaluation, these states examine educational costs and benefits, student success, and job placement rates. For example,

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Utah's System of Higher Education (USHE) issues a biennial assessment and accountability report regarding its effectiveness in areas of legislative interest, including student outcomes, faculty productivity, and program and facility measures. In the student outcomes area, the report presents information on graduation rates, student satisfaction, and the relationship between students' education and their ability to find employment. Among other details, the report includes average numbers of credits to degree completion at each college, percentages of students accepted into more advanced training, and results of surveys indicating the reasons students chose to leave without completing a degree. USHE draws together information from institutional reports and other relevant data sources, and presents it in a single, comprehensive report.

Arizona's Board intended to follow through on the Task Force recommendations by issuing an annual report on all five elements, based on districts' self-reported information. However, the Legislature eliminated funding for the Board's only research associate position in 1995. As a result, the report was never issued, although the research associate did prepare a report on Return on Investment in 1995.

Board should monitor academic program quality -- In addition to monitoring system performance, the Board should conduct periodic evaluations of academic programs and specific courses. Program evaluation measures whether academic programs are achieving the desired effects in areas such as student success, program quality and consistency, and cost to the State. The need for cost-effectiveness evaluation was noted in the 1987 Sunset review, which stated that occupational courses may have limited life spans if the market for an occupation has been eliminated or reduced; and without continuous systematic review, programs may outlive their usefulness. Evaluation of program quality is equally important, both to ensure transfer students' success in universities and to ensure students in occupational programs can meet the challenges of expanding technology and increasing competitiveness. Arizona stakeholders agree on the importance of evaluating program quality. More than 90 percent of respondents to a survey conducted for this audit identified evaluating program quality as an important function.

Currently, the Board limits its program review to approving proposals for new programs, which involves reviewing new program proposals to verify that college representatives have performed a needs assessment and obtained authorization from the district governing board to begin the new program. In 1995 and 1996, the Board approved 20 new academic programs in this way. This initial approval aids communication among colleges and helps to avoid program duplication, because the process involves notifying all districts of the proposed program. However, it does not ensure that, over time, the programs provide high-quality, relevant education. In comparison, other states do evaluate existing programs to determine their effectiveness. For example,

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The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews programs to encourage continuous improvement of the colleges, ensure accountability for public expenditures, and demonstrate and promote the quality of Texas' colleges. Each community college performs annual self-evaluations of program effectiveness and reports to the Board, and every five years the Board conducts an on-side review of each college that includes verifying reported outcomes. As a result of the Board's recent reviews of 1,291 technical programs, it was determined that 21 percent of the degrees or certificates should be discontinued, while 79 percent were recommended for continuation or continuation with improvements. The review also enabled the Board to issue awards to several exemplary programs.

As with monitoring institutional effectiveness, Arizona's Board considers monitoring program quality a function of districts and colleges. However, the State's financial investment in the colleges, as well as the importance of ensuring that college students are well prepared to contribute to the State's economy and succeed in the state universities, make monitoring program quality a legitimate function of the Board. Further, as in Texas, a state-level review can identify excellent programs and lead to enhanced sharing of best practices with other programs throughout Arizona.

Recommendations

1. The Board should measure and report on systemwide institutional effectiveness by:

   - Establishing evaluation standards for measuring institutional effectiveness in the five areas identified by the 1994 Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness: ***Access to education, Transfer effectiveness, Economic impact and workforce development, Community development, Return on investment.***

   - Determining which data can be collected independently by Board staff, and which should be

provided to the Board by the community college districts.

- Providing guidelines to districts for information to be included.
- Collecting, analyzing, and verifying the data, and
- Reporting annually to the Legislature.

2. The Board should assess and monitor academic program quality by:

- Establishing evaluation standards for reviews of academic programs and courses,
- Requiring districts to conduct and report on internal reviews of program quality, and
- Conducting periodic reviews of academic programs and courses to measure effectiveness, determine continued need, and recommend improvements.